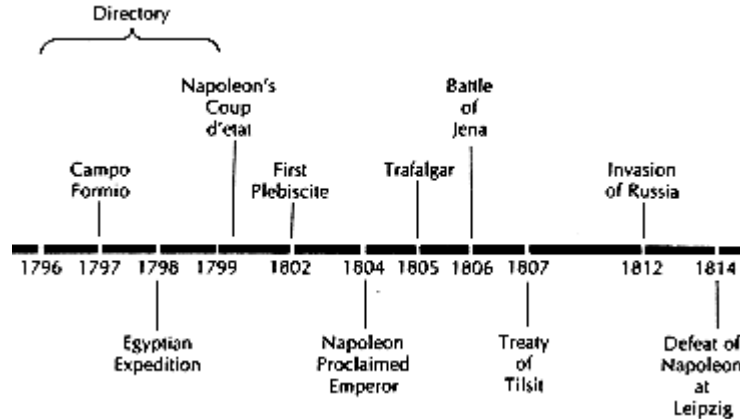


REVIEW GUIDE FOR NAPOLEON & THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

TIMELINE



The history of France and Europe during the period from 1799 to 1815 is largely the story of Napoleon Bonaparte. A brilliant general in the cause of the French Revolution, Napoleon took power in 1799 and established the Consulate. In 1804, he took the title of emperor of the French. While Napoleon deprived the French people of political liberty, he provided them with an orderly and efficient system of government and confirmed or initiated a number of enduring legal, administrative, and educational reforms.

As a conqueror, Napoleon achieved his greatest military successes in the years from 1805 to 1807, defeating Austria, Prussia, and Russia. His ability and power gradually declined, however, and the disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812 marked the beginning of his fall. After abdicating in 1814, Napoleon returned to power for the period of the Hundred Days in 1815. Defeated at Waterloo in June 1815, he entered his final exile on the remote island of Saint Helena in the South Atlantic where he died in 1821.

As France's ruler in the years after 1799, Napoleon deprived the French people of political liberty. But he confirmed a number of reforms achieved by the French Revolution—among them, freedom of religion and the principles of equality before the law and equality of opportunity—and made them permanent. Napoleon also introduced a number of reforms—including an efficient centralized administration, the Napoleonic Code, the Concordat of 1801, and a series of educational reforms—that became enduring features of French life.

Despite his undeniable genius as a military commander, Napoleon failed in his efforts to make France the master of Europe. In 1814–1815, the statesmen of Europe (Castlereagh of England, Alexander I of Russia, Metternich of Austria, Hardenberg of Prussia, Talleyrand of France) met in the Congress of Vienna and sought to restore stability and order following a quarter of a century of turmoil.

After entering Paris in March 1814, the allies restored the legitimate Bourbon dynasty to the French throne, and Louis XVIII (r. 1814–1824) became king. In the first Treaty of Paris (May 1814), the allies offered France relatively lenient peace terms. At the Congress of Vienna the Quadruple Alliance of the great powers (Austria, Prussia, Russia and Great Britain) was formed with the idea of restoration in Europe. However, following Napoleon's return to power during the Hundred Days in 1815 and his final defeat at Waterloo, the allies imposed harsher terms on France in the second Treaty of Paris (November 1815).

The other details of the peace settlement were determined by an international congress. The statesmen who met in this Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815 sought to reestablish a conservative order in Europe following the years of upheaval and war brought about by the French Revolution and Napoleon.

The conservative order established at Vienna in 1814-1815 prevailed throughout Central and Eastern Europe without serious threat until the outbreak of the revolutions of 1848. The balance of power established at Vienna remained fundamentally undisturbed until the unification of Germany in 1871, and no major war involved all of the major powers until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

In Italy and Spain, the conservative powers succeeded in suppressing revolutions. However, Greece and Belgium, as well as the Latin American colonies of Spain and Portugal, made good their claims to independence. And in Great Britain and France, the conservative regimes that ruled in the years immediately following 1815 were able to forestall only temporarily the trend toward liberalization.